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SUBJECT: LATVIA: NO PLANS FOR NUCLEAR POWER, EXCEPT IN LITHUANIA

REF: STATE 127423

¶1. Latvia has no nuclear power plants, and no plans to develop nuclear power facilities within its own borders. As Latvia explored its options for increasing its generation capacity in mid-2008, there was some speculation that a small nuclear power plant would be one potential solution. Since then, that idea has largely been dismissed as unworkable. There is essentially no existing expertise or industry for developing or operating a nuclear facility.

¶2. However, Latvia remains involved in the planning of the Visaginas (Ignalina) Nuclear Power Plant (VNPP) in Lithuania. As one of four countries currently involved in the project, Latvia will presumably have some voice in planning decisions surrounding that facility, although Lithuania will be leading the project. Assuming the project goes forward with Latvia as a partner, it would largely be a business transaction from the Latvian perspective. Because the facility would be in Lithuania, there is little need for Latvia to develop a civilian nuclear regulatory framework or train a nuclear workforce. There is not yet a plan for financing the project.

¶3. As a result, opportunities for U.S. industry would be limited to influencing Latvian decision-makers in their decisions about VNPP. The key contacts for these decisions are at the Ministry of Economy, including Minister Kaspars Gerhards, State Secretary Anrijs Matiss, and Head of Energy Division Ugis Sarma.

Rogers